

Unionists in Tunisia: 'Beast still breathing'

BY CINDY JAQUITH

"The revolution isn't over yet," Abdelaziz Bouazi, a member of the teachers union in the Tunisian city of Kasserine, told London's *Guardian* newspaper. "The regime's head has been cut off, but the beast is still breathing. For now, the demonstrations will continue."

One month after the ouster of Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, workers and farmers are organizing to win wider freedoms, eradicate all remnants of the old regime, and get relief from unemployment, high prices, and continued police brutality.

Kasserine, near the border with Algeria, has the nation's highest unemployment rate and had the largest number of deaths of demonstrators in the protests that forced out Ben Ali.

Unionists and others there have formed defense committees to patrol the neighborhoods since the dictator's departure. Bouazi himself had been on patrol until 4:00 a.m. the day he was interviewed.

On January 31 gangs of thugs en-
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Egypt: Workers strike for wage raises, rights

Military command seeks to end protests



AFP/Getty Images

Workers at the Dahqaliya weaving company demonstrate for better conditions in Mansoura, Egypt, February 14. Placard reads, "Down with the board of management."

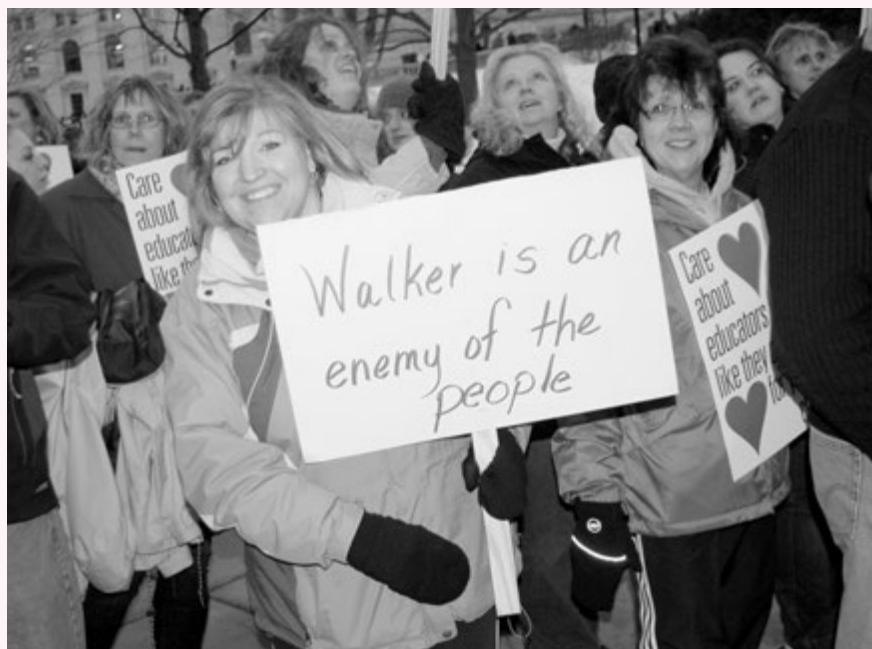
BY SETH GALINSKY

After the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's military command is attempting to end protest actions and assert its control over the coun-

try. While demonstrators who had camped out at Tahrir Square in Cairo have left, mobilizations of workers, farmers, and youth continue. Tens of thousands of workers around the country who are on strike demanding higher wages and better working conditions are part of this ferment.

Mubarak, a close U.S. ally, resigned February 11, handed power to the
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Thousands protest Wisconsin budget cuts



Militant/Zena Jasper

MADISON, Wisconsin—Thousands demonstrated here February 15 to protest Gov. Scott Walker's budget proposals. Vowing to get public workers "into line," the governor plans to double health-care premiums to more than 12 percent of pay and make workers contribute almost 6 percent of their wages to cover pensions. The governor seeks to virtually end collective bargaining for 175,000 state employees.

A rally of some 12,000 was held at the capitol at noon and a candlelight vigil brought out another 10,000 in the evening. Demonstrators came from as far away as Green Bay and Fond du Lac.

High school students in Stoughton, Wisconsin, walked out of school February 14 to hold a rally denouncing the budget measures. Students at West High in Madison walked out the following day.

Governor Walker has threatened to use the National Guard against public workers if they go on strike.

—ZENA JASPER

Bipartisan budget axe takes aim at workers

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Announcing a five-year freeze on "all discretionary spending outside of security," U.S. president Barack Obama presented a federal budget February 14 that is part of the bipartisan drive to cut social spending in order to reduce the ballooning government debt and protect payments to the wealthy bondholders.

Democrats and Republicans alike are committed to war spending. The Obama budget calls for \$671 billion in military spending over the next year, including \$118 billion for the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. The U.S. government currently spends almost as much on military outlays as all other countries in the world combined.

The war against working people at home is also projected to be well funded. The Department of Homeland Security's budget will increase. The number of Border Patrol agents will climb to an all-time high of 21,370, reflecting "the largest deployment of law enforcement officers to the front line in the agency's history," said the department. New York City alone will receive an additional \$41.2 million to "fight terror."

According to the *Washington Post*, half of all government agencies, how-
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Victory! 429 sign up to become long-term readers of 'Militant'

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Congratulations to supporters of the *Militant* around the world who in the past month successfully signed up 429 long-term readers to the paper, going well over the goal of 400. At the same time more than 200 people took advantage of the introductory offer and subscribed to the paper for the first time.

A big highlight of the campaign was efforts by socialists to sign up their co-workers to renew. Teams of *Militant* supporters also responded to demonstrations in their cities in solidarity with the protests in Egypt. Many introductory and some long-term subscriptions were sold at these actions.

By working to expand the long-term readership of the paper, socialists are meeting workers and youth who are interested in working-class politics and strengthening the fight to defend workers' rights.

Following are some of the notes from our distributors about the success of the renewal campaign.



The Young Socialists at the State University of New York at New Paltz got two renewals. Both were from current readers of the paper whose subscriptions hadn't yet expired but wanted to renew early to be part of the campaign. One reader, Zach Anderson, learned about the Prisoners'
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Australia cyclone hits workers, farmers hard

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Cyclone Yasi, the most powerful cyclone to hit the north Queensland coast of Australia in living memory, has devastated working people there and beyond, leaving many homeless and without jobs.

The cyclone was the latest in a series of torrential rains that have hit eastern Australia since September, bringing massive damage to roads, rail, public utility infrastructure, and housing, along with the loss of farm, mining, and other production, as well as lost tourism revenue.

Labor prime minister Julia Gillard is proposing to fund reconstruction with A\$3.8 billion in federal spending cuts and with a new tax, a “flood levy,” on those earning more than A\$50,000 annually. The minimum wage here is just under A\$30,000. The Australian dollar is roughly equal to the U.S. dollar.

Cyclone Yasi hit after major flooding in Brisbane in mid-January, and after a deadly flash flood swept through Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley west of Brisbane January 10. More than 80 towns in Queensland and almost 80 in Victoria are reported to have been affected by the floods in recent months. An “inland sea” some 56 miles long and 25 miles wide has formed near Swan Hill, a town in north Victoria.

The flood waters that have covered vast swathes of farmland across eastern Australia come after 10 years of drought, with many family farmers already facing ruin. As much as 60 percent of Australia’s projected 28 million-ton wheat crop could be reduced to feed quality.

In the cyclone-hit town of Tully in

north Queensland hundreds of banana farm workers have lost their jobs as well as their houses. The *Australian* reported that Harbinder and Rabinder Singh and their five-month-old son now share a two-bedroom home with nine other families. After two weeks of cleanup work they face the prospect of no work on the banana farms for 10 months.

The sugar mill in the town, which employs 200 workers, also suffered millions of dollars of damage.

Towns like Tully along the coast were left without power, water, and sewage systems. It is expected to take weeks or even months to restore services to thousands of houses.

At the center of the capitalists’ concern is the impact of the flooding on Queensland open-cut coal mines. By mid-January some 50 of the 57 coal mines in the state were affected by the floods—either inundated or hit by damage to the road and rail networks. About 30 million tons of production have been lost. Cyclone Yasi shut the coal ports for up to a week.

The export of coal, iron, and other minerals, primarily to China, Japan, and South Korea, has buffered Australia’s capitalists from the worst of the global financial crisis of recent years. Queensland’s coal mines alone produce about 10 percent of Australia’s exports.

Miners union spokesperson Jim Valery reported that many “casual workers” have been unable to find work with most mines not at full production. The “safety of the workers has to remain the highest priority,” he warned, before operators “kick into production.”

Montreal action backs protesters in Algeria



Militant/John Steele

MONTREAL—Some 1,000 Algerians, Tunisians, Egyptians, other North African immigrants, and Quebecois marched to the Algerian consulate here February 12 in solidarity with demonstrations taking place the same day in Algeria, calling for the ouster of the country’s president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The protesters chanted, “Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria—Why not?” One placard stated: “The people 2, dictators 0. Next match, Algeria vs. the generals.”

The previous day about 200 Egyptians and supporters danced, shouted, and sang in front of the Egyptian consulate celebrating the resignation of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Tarek Borollo and his mother Dina told the *Militant* that they had just returned from Tahrir Square in Cairo that morning. “We are standing up for human dignity, democracy, and peace,” he said.

—ANNETTE KOURI AND JOHN STEELE

Students in Puerto Rico demand repeal fee hike, cops off campus

BY SETH GALINSKY

Thousands marched in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, February 12 in support of students demanding the repeal of an \$800 annual fee increase at the University of Puerto Rico and the withdrawal of police from the campus.

Puerto Rico governor Luis Fortuño ordered the cops to the campus in December, claiming that students protesting the fee increase had been violent and were disrupting classes. This is the first time police have been stationed on campus since they were banned in the early 1980s after cops attacked student protesters.

Fortuño used the cops to prevent students from repeating their successful two-month strike last spring, which had temporarily blocked plans to hike fees and reduce the number of tuition waivers. In December university officials also

set designated protest areas and banned protests anywhere else on campus.

Scenes of cops beating student protesters on campus in early February gave impetus to demands for their withdrawal. On February 14 Fortuño backed down, announcing the bulk of the cops would be removed. Some 200 cops from the police Tactical Operations Unit ended their occupation of the Río Piedras campus, although some cops are still stationed at the main entrances.

That same day students marched through the campus chanting “Education is a right, not a privilege.”

On February 15 protest leader Waldemiro Vélez Soto said students were willing to negotiate with the university administration as long as “it’s clear that the struggle continues. This is not just about removing the police. We are fighting to get rid of the fee.”

The Militant

Vol. 75/No. 8

Closing news date: February 16, 2011

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Published weekly except for one week in January, one week in July, and one week in September.

The *Militant* (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899 Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

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United Kingdom: Send £26 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green Road (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, England.

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Defend women's right to choose abortion!

State legislators across the country are attempting to enact new laws further restricting a woman's right to choose. The ‘Militant’ covers the fight to defend abortion rights, a precondition for equality and liberation of women and central to defending workers rights. Don't miss an issue.



Militant/Paul Pederson
January 22 Washington, D.C., picket in support of abortion rights.

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Nebraska events discuss Malcolm X leadership

BY JOE SWANSON
AND MAGGIE TROWE

OMAHA, Nebraska—Students and workers from across this city and nearby came to meetings at two universities here to join in a discussion with Steve Clark, editor of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. The book was published a year ago by Pathfinder Press.

Forty people attended the meeting at Creighton University February 14 sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Black Studies Department, Multicultural Advisory Council, Initiatives for Diversity and Education and Action, and the Pathfinder book center in Des Moines, Iowa. Creighton, a Jesuit university located on the edge of Omaha's Black community, has more than 7,000 students.

Along with students and faculty from Creighton, participants included Walter Brooks, a leader of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, a group that organizes a visitors' and community center at the birth site of Malcolm X in north Omaha; and workers from Minneapolis, Des Moines, Omaha, and Lincoln, Nebraska. Also participating in the event were four young activists who have been leading efforts to organize a union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), at Jimmy John's sandwich shops and Starbucks in Omaha.

Ricardo Ariza, director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, chaired the meeting.

Clark described some of the history the book recounts about the struggles of workers and farmers who are Black and other working people over the past 150 years. "One of the central purposes of the book, Barnes explains, is to make the case that Malcolm X was a revolutionary leader of the working class," Clark said.

A political showdown'

"Recognizing this is more important than ever today," Clark said, "with the capitalist crisis devastating workers all over the world, including millions who are African American, and with U.S. imperialism fighting wars from Afghanistan to Pakistan and beyond."

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

What Does the Changed Class Structure of the U.S. Black Population Mean for the Working Class? Speaker: James Harris, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m. Suggested donation: \$5. 4025 S. Western Ave. Tel.: (323) 295-2600.

San Francisco

What Next for Working People in Egypt and the Region? Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

Soldier of the Cuban Revolution: Presentation and Discussion on New Pathfinder Book. Fri., Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m. Suggested donation: \$5. 3701 Pulaski Ave. Tel.: (215) 225-1270.

WASHINGTON

Seattle

Thomas Sankara and the Burkina Faso Revolution. Fri., Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m. Suggested donation: \$5. 5418 Rainier Ave. S. Tel.: (206) 323-1755.

In January 1965 Malcolm X told a television interviewer in Canada that the world is heading toward "a political showdown . . . between the economic systems that exist on this earth." He then continued, "I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing. . . . But I don't think that it will be based upon the color of the skin."

Today, Clark said, "we see such a clash opening in Tunisia and spreading to Egypt, where struggles have swept across cities and expanded into strikes. This has led to the fall of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, but not the military regime he headed for decades.

"This is a blood-drenched regime," Clark said, "backed by U.S. administrations of both the Democratic and Republican parties, including today President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"Power remains in the hands of the armed forces officer corps. The army, top figures from the Mubarak regime, the Muslim Brotherhood, and various bourgeois opposition leaders all have their proposals for a government to maintain capitalist profits and political rule.

"Working people in Egypt need to organize and strengthen their own committees and councils in neighborhoods, factories, and villages," Clark said. They need time and political space to chart a course to the revolutionary struggles for power.

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the



Militant/Tony Lane

Steve Clark, right, editor of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, speaks with participants at February 14 Creighton University meeting about the book.

Road to Workers Power, Clark said, "is a book about the dictatorship of capital and the consequences for billions of working people the world over of the crisis of capitalist rule by a handful of propertied families.

"The author, Jack Barnes, does not make the claim that the establishment of a workers and farmers government will end racism, second-class status of women, or other forms of exploitation and oppression," Clark stated. "The author makes a more modest—but very important claim—that only such a government gives working people and the oppressed the essential political instrument we need to advance the fights to eliminate these scourges once and for all."

During a lively discussion period, Don Muhr, 32, one of the IWW organizers, asked Clark what he thought "about

the labor unions supporting the building of the proposed transcontinental pipeline from the oil fields in Canada to the Gulf Coast that will pass over parts of Nebraska's underground water reservoir known as the Ogallala aquifer."

Clark explained that workers and our unions must take up the question of stewardship of the land and nature as a social issue. This is part of fighting for workers control of conditions in our workplaces in order to guarantee health and safety on the job, safe products for the public, and production methods that do not damage the soil, waters, air, and natural environment whose transformation by labor is the source of all social wealth.

One participant asked Clark whether in giving so much importance to working-class struggles, he wasn't under-

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'Book's strong point is talking about revolution'

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

MONTREAL—Some 40 people came to a panel presentation at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) February 10 on the book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes.

The event was organized by the Observatoire des Amériques (Observatory of the Americas) of UQAM and Pathfinder Books as part of Black History Month. It was chaired by Victor Armony, the director of the Observatoire and a sociology professor at UQAM.

The first speaker was Steve Clark, an editor of the book. He explained that in one of his last interviews, Malcolm X said, "I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing."

This is what millions around the world see beginning to unfold today in Tunisia and Egypt, said Clark: a clash between the workers, farmers, and youth on one side, and the capitalists and large landowners on the other backed by Washington, Ottawa, and other imperialist powers.

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power discusses the need for workers to organize a revolutionary movement to seize political power from the hands of the exploiters in order to reorganize society in the interests of the working majority, continued Clark. This workers power is the most powerful tool that exists to begin to put an end to racism, sexism, and all the relations of oppression that characterize capitalism.

Clark recalled the intransigent opposition by Malcolm X to the twin parties of capital in the United States, the Democrats and Republicans. He also explained that the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and '60s helped break down racial prejudices among working people, strengthening the working class as a whole.

Réginald Delva, Haitian-born host and producer at Radio Montreal, said, "*Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes is a rehabilitation of Malcolm X for both whites and Blacks." He recounted how

he was struck by the discrimination and racial segregation he saw during his first visit to the United States at the age of five in 1965. "No Negroes, no dogs" was written on the doors of certain restaurants.

Delva recalled the image of the "house Negro" who completely identifies with his master. "Malcolm was a field Negro," Delva said. "When the master's house caught fire, he wished that the wind would blow stronger."

Reading the book helped him understand why you hear so much about Martin Luther King and relatively little about Malcolm X, Delva said. "Barnes presents another view of Malcolm X," as a leader who "didn't turn the other cheek." It is a strong point, he added, that *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* talks about all the revolutions, in particular in Cuba and Algeria.

UQAM history professor Greg Robinson, a specialist in Asian immigration to the United States, spoke about Chinese and Japanese activists in the Black rights movement. Marie Conilh de Beyssac, a master student in sociology at UQAM, ended the panel with a comparison of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, the two most well known leaders of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Before and after the event, those attending browsed books and other materials on display at tables set up by Pathfinder Books, the Kepkaa Creole bookstore, the Quebec Committee for the Rights of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic and *La pleine lune* (Full moon) publishing house.

Cuba International Book Fair opens in Havana

BY NAOMI CRAINE
AND JOHN HAWKINS

HAVANA—"Fifty years ago, thousands of Cuban youth waged one of the most beautiful battles in this revolution," said Zuleica Romay, president of the Cuban Book Institute. Speaking at the February 10 inauguration of the Cuba International Book Fair, Romay described how young people traveled the "valleys and mountains, workshops and factories . . . to teach more than a million of their compatriots to read and write."

The 1961 literacy campaign "was the victorious revolution's first mass cultural action," she said. It began a process that has "transformed reading into a spiritual need for broad layers of the Cuban population."

The annual book fair has become a nationwide event, traveling to each province. Last year it attracted more than 2 million people across the island. Starting in Havana February 10–20, it will close March 6 in Santiago de Cuba in the east.

Cuban publishers have made available some 2,000 titles, including 600 for children and teenagers, and a total of 6 million books for sale at highly subsidized prices, Romay noted. This is an increase over last year's program. Dozens of publishers from abroad are also participating, among them Pathfinder Press.

The fair is based at San Carlos de la Cabaña, an 18th century Spanish fort overlooking Havana Bay. Hundreds of book presentations, panel discussions, concerts, film showings, and other cultural events are part of the fair program. This year many of these events are being organized at additional venues in central Havana, making it easier for many to attend them than was the case for previous fair events located only at La Cabaña.

The theme of this year's book fair is the commemoration of the bicentennial of independence struggles throughout Latin America and the 220th anniversary of the beginning of the Haitian revolution. It is dedicated to two Cuban writers, Jaime Sarusky and Fernando Martínez Heredia, both of whom spoke briefly at the inaugural

ceremony.

Sarusky, a novelist and literary journalist, won the National Prize for literature in 2004. Martínez Heredia, who as a teenager participated in the revolutionary struggle against the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship, was editor of the Marxist magazine *Pensamiento Crítico* and head of the philosophy department at the University of Havana from 1966 to 1971. In 2006 he was awarded the National Prize for Social Sciences.

In his remarks at the inauguration, Sarusky noted that before the revolution there was little publishing in Cuba. The most prominent Cuban authors often had to publish their works abroad. The scope of the book fair shows how much that has changed.

The socialist revolution changed Cuba entirely—"the people's lives, our ideas, our feelings," Martínez said. Today "the general level of political consciousness is practically unequaled in the world." This makes it possible to "advance toward strengthening socialism." He was



Militant/Naomi Craine

The 2011 Cuba International Book Fair in Havana. Government has made more than 6 million books available at highly subsidized prices, an increase over last year.

referring to the discussions taking place among millions of Cubans on measures by the revolutionary government to confront the economic challenges facing the revolution.

"We know this will be difficult,"

he said. But from the beginning the course of the Cuban Revolution was shaped "by the action, determination, and self-sacrifice of the masses who organized themselves, fought, and united." Today "they can do so again."

Victory! 429 sign up for long-term subs

Continued from front page

Fund when he was renewing and donated \$3. The Young Socialists have decided to order a weekly bundle of seven papers.

—Harry D'Agostino
New Paltz, New York

Among the renewals are three students and a professor at Concordia University. One first-time subscriber, who is from Iraq, renewed at a demonstration to support the struggle in Egypt. A former subscriber decided to renew after attending the meeting at the University of Quebec February 10 on *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, featuring Steve Clark, one of the coeditors of the book by Jack Barnes.

—Joe Young
Montreal, Quebec

At the glass factory where I work with another supporter of the paper we sold seven subscriptions in the fall

drive. Four of those coworkers have decided to renew. There is lots of interest in the events in Egypt.

—Betsy Farley
Chicago

Two barbershops near the campaign headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party here renewed their subscriptions. One barber, Marvin Newsome, said he enjoyed reading the paper, as did many of his customers. Newsome pointed to the *Militant*'s front-page headline on Egypt and said, "I wish we had some of that protest here."

Also, a former coworker at JBS meatpacking, Raul Díaz Castro, renewed for six months and bought a copy of the new Pathfinder title *Soldier of the Cuban Revolution*.

—John Staggs
Philadelphia

The high point in the renewal drive this week was when supporters of the paper did a sale at a factory gate where they used to work and met up with a Kenyan worker afterwards. He renewed and wanted to get the latest coverage on what was happening in Egypt.

—Linda Harris
Sydney, Australia

Socialists who work at a large pharmaceutical plant in the Bronx organized by the Teamsters had a goal of five renewals to the *Militant*. Seven renewals were sold including one to a coworker who went on the union bus to the October 2 rally in Washington, D.C., for jobs, and got his first subscription upon returning.

—Francisco Cambero
New York

Two workers renewed when we arranged to meet up with them at a protest against the anti-immigrant "Secure Communities Program." Another worker at the protest arranged for a home visit the next day where he renewed his subscription and bought *Soldier of the Cuban Revolution* in Spanish. His sister bought the Spanish edition of *Malcolm*

X, *Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

—Laura Garza
Boston

Two more coworkers renewed their subscriptions following a discussion we had before work on the *Militant* editorial on Egypt. Another coworker decided to subscribe for the first time.

—Amanda Ulman
Houston



Subscription Renewal Drive Week 4—Final Chart

Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
San Francisco	25	36	144%
Miami	15	20	133%
New York	55	65	118%
Los Angeles	25	29	116%
Atlanta	20	23	115%
Houston	15	17	113%
Seattle	18	20	111%
Twin Cities	25	27	108%
Chicago	25	26	104%
Boston	15	15	100%
Des Moines, IA	25	25	100%
Philadelphia	25	25	100%
Washington, D.C.	24	24	100%
Total U.S.	312	352	113%
United Kingdom			
Canada	20	21	105%
New Zealand	15	15	100%
Australia	17	16	94%
Total	384	429	107%
International goal	400	400	100%

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End injustice of Cuban 5, says Howard Univ. panel

BY PAUL PEDERSON

WASHINGTON—A program titled “End Twelve Years of Injustice: Free the Cuban Five from U.S. Prisons” was held here at Howard University’s Founders Library February 8.

About 60 people came to hear Luis Rumbaut, director of communications for the Cuban American Alliance Education Fund, which opposes the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba; Kathryn Strifolino, International Advocacy Director (Latin America) for Amnesty International; Kamau Benjamin from the D.C. Metro Coalition to Free the Cuban Five; and Carl Gentile, chair of the U.S. Labor for Friendship with Cuba.

The Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González—have been imprisoned in the United States for more than 12 years.

They were in Miami in the 1990s monitoring right-wing groups that,

with the complicity of the U.S. government, have carried out violent attacks against Cuba. Arrested by federal authorities in 1998, they were convicted in 2001 on a series of frame-up charges and given draconian sentences.

Rumbaut gave a brief history of the measures the U.S. government took in the 1990s to increase economic pressure on Cuba and how the case of the five was a political frame-up.

Amnesty International “has serious doubts about the fairness and impartiality of their trial,” said Strifolino. The U.S. government’s continued refusal to grant visas to Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernández, and Olga Salanueva, wife of René González, to visit their imprisoned husbands is “unnecessarily harsh and constitutes additional punishment and inhumane treatment,” she added.

A lively question-and-answer period followed the presentations. Dmitry Robertson, 22, a student of Spanish



Militant/Leah Morrison

February 8 meeting to free Cuban Five, held at Howard University in Washington, D.C. From left, Kamau Benjamin, Omari Musa, Kathryn Strifolino, Carl Gentile, and Luis Rumbaut.

and political science at Howard, asked what he can do to help free the five.

Moderator Omari Musa, an activist in the D.C. Metro Coalition and leader of the Socialist Workers Party, encouraged Robertson to reach out to professors and student groups to organize presentations

on the case. More than 30 people signed up to get involved in future activities.

Camera crews from CNN Español and Univisión, the Spanish-language cable network, filmed the event. The Cuban Interests Section provided a display of political cartoons by Hernández.

Omaha students and others discuss Malcolm X leadership

Continued from page 3

emphasizing how education could be reformed, something this person saw as a pressing need. “Education is completely tied to class relations,” Clark replied. “The capitalist rulers don’t need for most of the working class to have an education. They need us to be obedient, to go to work, to punch a time clock, to keep our mouths shut. And when we are too old to work—too old to squeeze any more profit from our labor—they don’t care what happens to us.”

“For a handful from better-off middle class layers and a few from working class families they hand out a diploma, which is a license to make more money, because, ‘I’m smart, and you’re not.’

“But education is something every human being should have a right to, from childhood through their lifetime, something the capitalists in power have no interest in providing. So if we’re going to transform education, first we have to make a revolution to replace the capitalist system,” Clark said.

Clark spoke the next day at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) sponsored by the Black Studies Department there. Sixty people attended the meeting, including more than 20 assigned by Black Studies professor Terrie Jackson-Miller, who also attended. Others who participated included department chair Omowale Akintunde; Felicia Dailey, the department’s administrative assistant; and James Freeman, director of the UNO Multicultural Affairs Office. Freeman met Malcolm X in 1965, as one of the students who invited Malcolm to speak at Tuskegee University in Alabama. Four high school students from Lincoln drove in for the meeting, sponsored by their English literature teacher.

Sharif Liwari, president of the Mal-

colm X Memorial Foundation in Omaha, chaired the meeting.

Several participants focused their questions and comments on the deteriorating economic conditions and inferior schools in North Omaha, a working-class area with a high percentage of African American residents.

Vickey Parks, a member of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, noted the decline of Black Studies programs at universities and said she expected a social explosion like the one in Egypt could happen in Omaha’s Black community. Freeman said the deterioration of the schools accelerated when desegregation, a conquest of the Black struggle of the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s, was dismantled in Omaha in the late 1990s.

Carl Tyler, a veteran Black rights fighter, commented, “When I think of Malcolm X, he didn’t just deal with racism in one community, like North Omaha, it was a worldwide struggle.”

Andrew Pulley, a taxi driver from Des Moines, said, “What we’re faced with is to figure out how to unite with the other oppressed and exploited peo-

ple to fight to overthrow the existing government and to set up a workers and farmers government.” Pulley suggested studying the lessons of revolutions in the Caribbean island of Grenada in 1979–83 and the West African country Burkina Faso in 1983–87, and the example of the socialist revolution in Cuba.

Clark pointed to a collection of books by Pathfinder Press displayed at the meeting that participants could buy and learn more about those revolutions.

He called special attention to the example of revolutionary Cuba, where workers and farmers threw out the dictatorship backed by Washington and made a socialist revolution at the opening of the 1960s. “It has set an example,” Clark said, “of how by taking power workers and farmers have a tool to fight to end exploitation and oppression at home and worldwide.”

Informal discussion continued for some time after the meeting. Later Liwari took Clark and others on a tour of the Malcolm X birth site in North Omaha and the new visitors center there.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 28, 1986

AUSTIN, Minn.—Four thousand unionists, farmers and their families, and students from all over the country gathered here February 15 to protest attempts to bust United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9. The UFCW local has been on strike six months against Hormel meatpacking company.

Hundreds of steelworkers, auto workers, teachers, truck drivers, refinery workers, longshoremen, public employees, and hospital workers marched carrying signs identifying their unions.

At the rally site, a large banner that read “Guard out of Austin” was brought onto the stage. The National Guard remains in Austin herding scabs for Hormel. Although there are several hundred scabs in the struck plant, production remains minimal.



February 27, 1961

Less than a week after the admission of the shocking murder of Congo independence leaders Patrice Lumumba, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, which set off protest demonstrations throughout the world, the United Nations was forced to confess that the U.S.-supported Kasavubu government had secretly sent at least six more political prisoners to South Kasai for “safekeeping” and that they had been butchered.

The crisis in the United Nations, precipitated by the announcement of the murder of Lumumba, is being pictured by all the capitalist spokesmen as a Soviet “declaration of war” on the UN. Their claim is that the UN offers the only hope to avoid civil war in the Congo and its possible widening into a world conflict.



February 29, 1936

EARLE, Ark.—The share croppers of Crittenden county are going through hell. This whole area is a picture of starvation, eviction and terror.

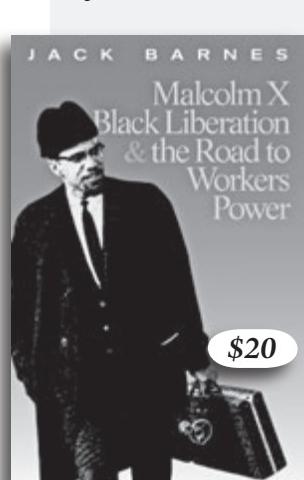
Two meetings were raided recently by mobs composed of planters, landlords, deputies, and riding bosses. Howard Kester, Secretary of the Central Defense Committee of the Union, [was] dragged from the platform of a church, beaten and threatened with lynching. The five hundred croppers attending the meeting were attacked with clubs and axe handles.

The dying agricultural system of the South must be overthrown, and its beneficiaries expropriated by the tenants themselves. This is a task for the future. Today the Union must be supported by protest actions and donations.

the United States—from the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to today—and the unimpeachable evidence it offers that workers who are Black will comprise a disproportionately weighty part of the ranks and leadership of the mass social movement that will make a proletarian revolution....

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This is a book about the dictatorship of capital and the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. A book about the last century and a half of class struggle in the United States—from the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to today—and the unimpeachable evidence it offers that workers who are Black will comprise a disproportionately weighty part of the ranks and leadership of the mass social movement that will make a proletarian revolution....

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Question of leadership in North Africa revolt

The following is an excerpt from the Socialist Workers Party draft resolution "Their Transformation and Ours," which appears in New International no. 12. It was adopted by the national convention of the SWP in 2005. The section below is titled "Exhaustion of Alternatives to Revolutionary Leadership." It is being reprinted to help our readers better understand the political dynamics of the battles being fought by workers, farmers, and young people in Egypt and across North Africa and the Middle East. Copyright © 2005 by New International. Reprinted by permission.



Underlying the absence of popular response to the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in the Arab and Muslim world is the exhaustion of the bourgeois-nationalist leaderships that, over the span of some eighty years, came to power on the shoulders of anti-imperialist struggles involving hundreds of millions of workers, peasants, and youth across Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Throughout much of the last century, these bourgeois currents filled a political vacuum left by political misleadership—if not outright betrayal—of worker and peasant battles and national liberation struggles by Moscow and its subordinate Stalinist parties in colonial countries themselves as well as the metropolitan centers of the respective imperialist overlords. If these bourgeois regimes in the oppressed nations toed the line sufficiently on matters of diplomatic importance to the Soviet bureaucracy, moreover, the caste in turn gave its tacit blessing to ruthless repression of workers, peasants, and national minorities, often including the local Communist parties themselves. In this way, governments such as that of Nasser in Egypt, Nkrumah in Ghana, or Sukarno in Indonesia gained some room for maneuver in conflicts with the imperialists and burnished their “radical” credentials for a time, both at home and through world forums such as the Movement of Nonaligned Nations.

With the end of the Cold War, even regimes that had still felt it in their interests in the closing decades of the century to retain some residual “anti-imperialist” verbiage found the cost-benefit

equation abruptly altered to their disadvantage. Those in the state bureaucracy and officer corps hoping to “make it” as part of rising bourgeois layers were suddenly and involuntarily weaned from the largesse and privileges made possible by their former relations with Moscow. (The massive funds available through United Nations agencies and related “Non-Governmental Organizations” helped, but were nowhere near the scope of paradise lost.)

Too fearful of the revolutionary energy of the toiling masses, too desirous of siphoning to themselves crumbs from the table of the imperialist exploiters, too beholden to their former colonial masters, and now bereft of patrons in the former Soviet Union, these second-, third-, and fourth-generation bourgeois-nationalist layers are operating in different world conditions from those even a quarter of a century ago. For the bourgeois ruling classes in these countries, both the times and stakes have changed. They’re different from the ones amid which—under pressure from the toilers’ democratic and anti-imperialist aspirations and mobilizations—Nasser took back the Suez Canal from British and French finance capital in 1956, and other governments

“Throughout much of the last century, bourgeois currents filled a political vacuum left by political misleadership—if not outright betrayal—of worker and peasant battles and national liberation struggles by Moscow and its subordinate Stalinist parties . . . ”

as recently as the late 1960s and early 1970s nationalized oil fields, refineries, and other natural resources owned by the propertied ruling families of U.S. and other imperialist powers.



A parallel and related exhaustion of revolutionary content marks the political evolution of petty-bourgeois and aspiring bourgeois leaderships of national liberation movements today: from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other Palestinian organizations such as Hamas, to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA).

These organizations arose (or re-



Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella addresses rally in early 1960s after revolution. SWP resolution says fight of toilers today requires leadership capable of mobilizing and leading workers and peasants to fight effectively for national liberation, freedom from imperialist domination, land to tillers, and organization of working class to act in interests of producing classes.

arose) during the closing decades of the twentieth century on the basis of powerful opposition to national oppression among the Palestinian, Irish, and Basque peoples. Over the past four decades, however, the leaderships of these

capitalist market have accelerated class differentiation within these oppressed nations (both bourgeoisification and proletarianization), the petty-bourgeois course of these leaderships has reached a political dead end. Frustration and demoralization are bearing fruit in intensified factionalism, including bloody internal score-settling.

These revolutionary national struggles themselves, the imperialist subjugation fueling them, and the self-sacrificing courage and determination of the toilers to fight are far from exhausted. The Palestinian people will continue to fight Israel because it occupies their land. Workers and farmers in northern Ireland and the Basque country will continue to resist oppression perpetuated by the ruling families of British and Spanish finance capital. But the political consequences of the crisis of leadership and its bourgeois corruption are posed more and more sharply.



What is often called “Islamism,” “Wahabism,” “jihad Islam,” “Salafism,” or “Islamic fundamentalism” (as distinct from the Islamic religion) has no revolutionary, let alone proletarian, content of any kind. Nor is it the wave of the future anywhere in the Muslim or Arab world. Its high point is behind us, not ahead.

September 11 marked a sensational blowoff, not a new beginning. These movements arose as a surrogate for revolutionary political leadership of the popular masses in face of the bankruptcy of Stalinist and bourgeois-nationalist forces.

The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a profound political and social upheaval, not a religious jihad. It became a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution in city and countryside, a revolution against the pro-imperialist monarchy of the shah and the brutal despotism of his hated SAVAK police agents. It opened space for workers and landless peasants, for women, for oppressed nationalities, for youth—for communists. It made possible the flowering of political space, debate,

Continued on next page

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Factory strikes in Egypt

Continued from front page

military command, and flew to the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh near the Red Sea. Hundreds of thousands gathered at Tahrir Square and cheered his ouster.

After pushing Mubarak aside as the protests continued to mount, armed forces officials suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament, which had been elected less than three months ago. The generals for the time being kept in place the cabinet, which is made up of members of Mubarak's National Democratic Party. The Supreme Military Council, headed by Field Marshal Mohammed Tantawi, has now taken the power to make laws. Tantawi was a close ally of Mubarak.

The protests that helped topple Mubarak have opened up space for working people to organize to defend their interests. Unlike the massive protests in Iran in 1979 that shattered the Shah's regime, however, the actions in Egypt ousted the ruling dictator, but not the military and political structure he led.

Many armed forces commanders had opposed plans for Mubarak's son Gamal, who never served as an officer, to take his father's place as president. Since the military coup that overthrew the king in 1952, all of Egypt's presidents—Gamal Abdul Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Mubarak—were high-ranking military officers before taking office.

If Gamal Mubarak had become president in upcoming elections, this would have given more influence to Egyptian capitalists with fewer ties to the military. This layer of the bourgeoisie often finds itself in competition with the officers for lucrative business deals.

Young leaders of the anti-Mubarak protests met two generals representing the Supreme Military Council February 13 at military intelligence headquarters in Cairo.

According to the *Washington Post*, one of the protest organizers who attended, Khaled al-Sayed, said the generals "told us that they agree with us, but they were reserved when we raised our specific issues." The generals refused demands to release political prisoners or overturn the repressive state-of-emergency laws that have been in place for decades. Of the generals' promises that they would hand over power to a civilian government in less than six months, al-Sayed commented, "That's also just talk."

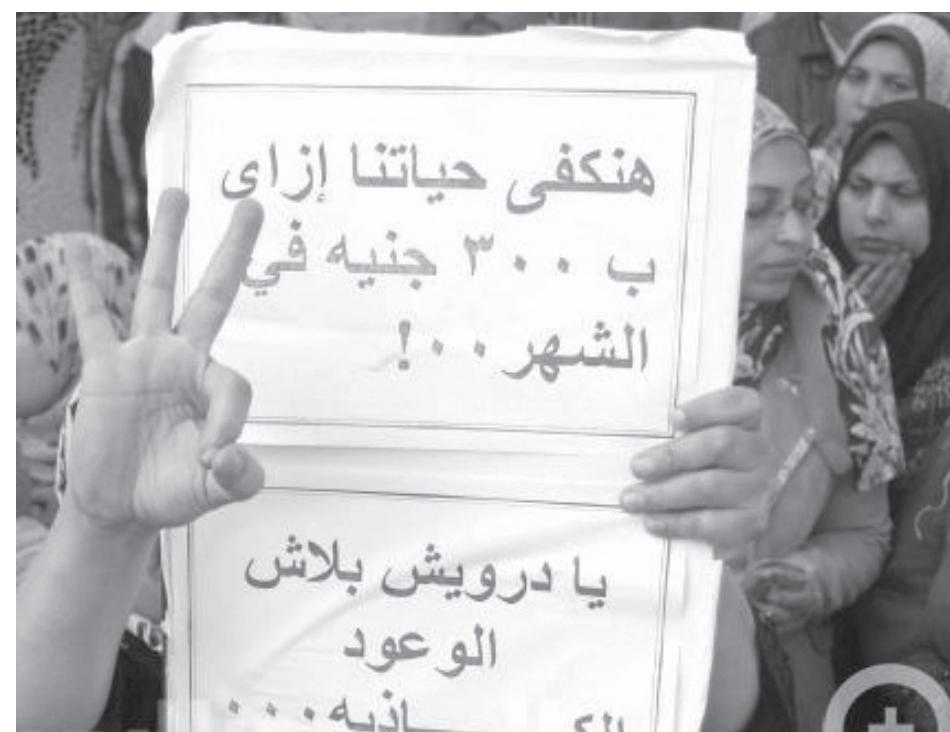
The next day the military council told thousands of workers on strike around the country to go back to work. "These strikes, at this delicate time, lead to negative results," an army communiqué stated. It demanded that everyone focus on work and production, not protests.

According to the February 15 *Wall Street Journal*, some youth leaders "endorsed the generals' efforts" to end the strikes. But one youth group, Associated Press reported, stated, "Strikes and protests should NOT stop." A march to celebrate Mubarak's ouster is planned for Tahrir Square February 18.

Temporary workers

Strikes, factory occupations, and protests for higher wages and better working conditions are growing, including by textile, bank, rail, airline, mine, tourism, and municipal workers.

A number of the strikes are demanding that temporary workers be given permanent positions. In 2003 the Egyp-



Workers at Mansoura University Hospital in Mansoura, Egypt, demonstrate for health insurance and permanent jobs January 24. Top sign says, "How can 300 Egyptian pounds a month ever meet our needs?" Lower sign reads, "No more false promises."

tian government passed a law allowing companies to expand the hiring of temporary workers with fewer rights and benefits. In some companies there are more temporary workers than permanent ones. Temporary workers are not allowed to join unions.

Some 2,400 workers at the Misr-Iran Textile company began a sit-down strike February 13 demanding monthly bonuses and making temporary workers permanent. Some 700 Coca-Cola workers in Nasr City are raising similar demands.

The February 14 edition of Egyptian daily *Al Masry Al Youm* reports on strikes by 4,000 workers at the Assiut Cement Company and 2,000 at the Assiut Fertilizer Factory south of Cairo.

On February 16, workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving factory in Ma-halla went on strike for higher wages and better work conditions. With 24,000 workers, the factory is the largest in Egypt.

Unions independent of the government-dominated Egyptian Trade Union Federation are banned and the right to strike severely restricted. Of 24 unions that make up the federation, 22 are headed by members of Mubarak's Na-

tional Democratic Party. In spite of this there have been thousands of strikes and factory sit-ins since 2004.

At a February 14 press conference the "Coalition of Young Revolutionaries" listed some of its demands. These include: lifting the state of emergency, abolition of martial law, dismantling the National Democratic Party, dissolving the state security apparatus, releasing all political prisoners, and respecting the right to form associations and unions. They also called for a new cabinet headed by "a patriotic civil personality that the people respect and trust."

While there are a dozen or so bourgeois "opposition" parties in Egypt, they have very limited support due to their weak resistance to Mubarak when he was in power.

Washington is backing the military government. Referring to the Egyptian armed forces commanders, Adm. Michael Mullen, head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "I think they have handled this situation exceptionally well." According to the *Washington Post*, Defense Secretary Robert Gates has talked to Tantawi at least six times in the last few weeks.

Question of leadership

Continued from previous page
and culture that to this day are far from being taken away.

The weight of religious figures and institutions grew stronger and more repressive as part of a political *counter-revolution*, stifling in the name of Islam the rebellion of the most intransigent workers in the oil fields and factories, peasants on the land, Kurds and other oppressed nationalities, women fighting for equality, revolutionary-minded soldiers, students, and other youth, and the boldest communists. The power and depth of that revolution is registered in the fact that the clerical-dominated bourgeoisie regime has never been able to come close to imposing suffocating political and cultural conditions of the kind the Taliban inflicted on Afghanistan or the Wahabi monarchists on Saudi Arabia.

The high point of "Islamist" action came with the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in late 1979, the year the Iranian Revolution brought down the shah. But the political content was the opposite. The armed units that laid claim to the mosque did so in the name of ousting royal Saudi infidels defiling Islam's holiest site. Over the subsequent two decades, this was followed up, among other actions, by the 1983 bombings of U.S. and French barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 U.S. marines and 58 French paratroopers; the 1993 bomb planted in the basement of the World Trade Center, killing 6 and wounding thousands; the 1996 truck

bombing of the Khobar military complex in Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. soldiers and injuring hundreds; the almost simultaneous 1998 bombings near U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 224 people and wounding some 4,500 (few of them Americans); and the 2000 speedboat assault on the USS *Cole* in the Yemeni harbor of Aden, killing 17 U.S. sailors.

In terms of the scope of death and destruction inflicted, the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were the most sensational of these actions. And there will be others (such as the 2004 Madrid railroad bombings and attacks in Bali and elsewhere in Indonesia in 2002 and 2004), just as the kidnappings, assassinations, robberies, and bombings by anti-working-class groups such as the Red Brigades, Baader-Meinhof Gang, Black Liberation Army, and Weather Underground continued for years after the "armed struggle" ultraleftism of the 1960s had peaked and headed further into political eclipse.

The September 2001 attacks, however, were a registration of weakness, not growing social or political strength. Al Qaeda and other such organizations have become more politically isolated internationally, including among working people and the middle classes throughout Arab and Islamic countries. And the imperialist rulers learn from each of these attacks, making them more difficult to repeat.

New International number 12 Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun

by Jack Barnes

Today's sharpening interimperialist conflicts are fueled by the opening stages of what will be decades of economic, financial, and social convulsions and class battles. Class-struggle-minded working people must face this historic turning point and draw satisfaction from being "in their face" as we chart a revolutionary course to confront it. \$16

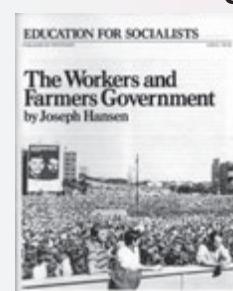


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Inside Cuba's revolutionary underground in 1950s

Below is an excerpt from Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58 by Armando Hart, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February. Aldabonazo—a warning knock on the door—was a rallying cry of students and young workers who went into the streets of Cuba in 1952 to resist the military coup led by Fulgencio Batista. On July 26 the following year, some 160 revolutionaries under the command of Fidel Castro launched an insurrectionary attack on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba together with a simultaneous attack on the garrison in Bayamo, opening the revolutionary armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship. The July 26 Revolutionary Movement was founded in June 1955 by Castro and others to lead the fight. The excerpt below is from the first issue of the movement's clandestine journal. Copyright © 2004 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Constantino Arias/Bohemia

Demonstration in Havana, April 6, 1952, against U.S.-backed military coup by Fulgencio Batista the previous month. In this first street demonstration against the dictatorship students symbolically buried Cuba's 1940 constitution annulled by Batista. Armando Hart, third from left, is holding up a copy of constitution. Raúl Castro (behind), is carrying the Cuban flag.

language of facts, is a categorical response to the March coup. The Movement's origin and aims, which we will present in these pages, reveal to us how Cuban youth have become unwilling to put up with the status quo that made possible the resounding collapse of our hollow political democracy. For this reason our aim is to become the revolutionary instrument of this new generation.

For the July 26 Movement, only those who aim at something more than simply toppling the dictatorship are capable of really eliminating it. That is the only way to draw together the moral forces of the nation. Those who simply strive to "topple the dictator" will not even achieve that, since they lack both serious motives and support from the social forces necessary to stand up to a regime embodying the most negative aspects of Cuban society. The July 26 Movement asserts that the current government is not the cause but the result of the republic's fundamental crisis. And it is working directly to resolve that crisis. It would hardly be worthwhile to confront the dictatorial, corrupt, and mediocre regime we suffer without aiming for a revolutionary transformation of the moral, political, economic, and social causes that made possible the criminal act committed by the seditious group. That is the reason for our revolutionary independence, and the reason for

being of our growing force. . . .

[T]he deepest cause of our crisis lies in the absence of a clearly defined revolutionary philosophy, and the lack of an organized will that drives us toward realizable goals of improvement, transformation, and progress. It has not been possible to have ideas completely govern individual conduct. The ideas of the

"Only those who aim at something more than simply toppling the dictatorship are capable of really eliminating it. . . ."

Cuban nation, in modern times, are still maintained as a great collective hunger. They are a desire that is scattered. That is, while they exist in the realm of sentiment, emotion, and will, they have nevertheless not been definitively accepted intellectually. When the democratic and socialist idea is spelled out to its final consequence, all action will be directed along this road. . . .

The heroic deed of the Moncada garrison and Bayamo is the unifying factor of our scattered national will. Eighty revolutionary martyrs offer us, through their example and sacrifice, a point of convergence that illuminates the country's future. The most beautiful lesson of that gesture was not only the courage and selflessness displayed by those brave men. It was also their conviction of the importance, transcendence, and power of their example—not to mention their

discretion and organizational capacity enabling them to reach the stage of combat. Only a total identification with revolution could write into history the rebel date of July 26, 1953. Cuba must find itself both by looking to the history of the mambises and patriots; and by looking to our generation, with the living example of a legion of contemporary martyrs.

A country with human resources and qualities such as ours cannot continue living in the hands of irresponsible and improvising opportunists of the lowest moral character. The world is advancing in the field of science, and technology makes bigger strides every day. Yet we ourselves are not walking to the tune of the times, since we have not succeeded in bringing together all honest, capable, bold, and talented men and putting them at the service of the country. Such men exist, but they're separated, far apart from one another, as if some centrifugal and malignant force were preventing their total unification. It is in the unity of these men—genuine representatives of the people of Cuba—that national unity and true democracy lie.

On the basis of its ideological position, the July 26 Revolutionary Movement for ten months has dedicated

itself to publicly proclaiming the need for revolutionary action, and to constructing a powerful underground organization that gathers together and interprets the ideas of the Cuban nation, and the immediate needs of the people.

This strategy has delivered the revolution from small circles of combatants and placed it in the hands of the people. All Cubans have the possibility of participating: not only those who take up arms, but also those prepared to leave work, to contribute financially to buy the rifles, or to extend help to the revolution in a thousand different ways. Large sectors of the population have, for a number of years, felt cut off from the struggle for freedom. The July 26 Movement, with a popular strategy and with insurrectional tactics, is incorporating these sectors into the revolution.

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BOOKS OF THE MONTH

By an imperative, collective necessity, a new generation has arisen to confront the revolutionary frustration that led us to the disaster of March 10, 1952. On that date a gang of common criminals seized power and destroyed the public order of the republic. The July 26 Movement, which spoke the

February BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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EDITORIAL

Familiar faces on Egyptian streets

Workers in the United States can recognize in the faces of the workers on strike, university students, peasants, and other Egyptians on the streets today something familiar: a struggle for dignity, for the right to organize and to speak out, for a decent standard of living.

Like many struggles that erupt in working-class communities in the United States, the explosions shaking North Africa and the Middle East were touched off by police abuse—a slap in the face of an unemployed peddler in Tunisia by a cop filled with contempt for the working class. It was one blow too many for workers and youth in that country, where, like here, millions are trapped in joblessness, wages too low to make ends meet, and capitalist rulers who turn a deaf ear to demands for relief.

In forcing the ouster of presidents Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, working people of Tunisia and Egypt discovered their own strength. These tyrants remained in power for decades with the help of the military and capitalist opposition parties intent on maintaining stability to maximize their profits. Workers everywhere can draw a les-

son from that experience—reliance on capitalist parties does not advance our class interests.

What lies before the masses in Tunisia and Egypt now is the possibility of organizing a working-class alternative to the capitalist rulers oppressing them and exploiting their labor. This is a time for meetings in factories, neighborhoods, and farming villages to discuss the next steps forward. To hold the ground already taken working people need councils of the toiling population—to defend their communities from police and right-wing thugs, organize solidarity with the strikes that continue, fight for an end to the state of emergency, for freeing the many political prisoners, and organizing to reach out to fellow fighters around the world.

Acting along these lines leads to a break with all the options promoted by imperialism and capitalist forces under the guise of “reform.” It is the road to rebuilding unions that fight for the needs of their members and all working people. It is in this way that a revolutionary proletarian party, the indispensable weapon the toilers need, can be forged to lead the working masses in the fight to take political power. That is the road forward for workers around the globe.

Tunisia unionists press for more rights

Continued from front page

tered Kasserine and attacked a police station and other buildings. The army stood by without stopping them. Residents organized to defend the buildings and capture some of the marauders. Local leaders of the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) told the *Guardian* the attackers were in the pay of Ben Ali’s now-banned party, out to terrorize the populace and make it appear that the collapse of the old regime has led to chaos.

In Gafsa, the center of phosphate mining, working people demanding jobs were still blocking the roads as of February 5. Workers there succeeded in driving out the newly appointed governor because of his ties to the old regime. Gafsa’s working people have long resented the regime for handing out mining jobs to Ben Ali’s favorites.

In at least two cities crowds demonstrated for removal of hated police commanders. Protesters in the city of Kef February 5 were fired on by cops, killing four people. The police station was burned down. Two demonstrators were also shot dead in Sidi Bouzid.

It was in cities outside the capital that the momen-

tum began inside the organized labor movement to join the fight to topple Ben Ali. The top officialdom of the 500,000-member UGTT had previously allied itself with the dictatorship.

According to an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, union militants in Gafsa called on the UGTT there to get involved in the struggle against the government, but the national leadership vetoed it January 10. Demands also came in from the cities of Sfax, Tozeur, and Sousse, where workers wanted to call a general strike. Finally, the national federation authorized the strikes.

UGTT secretary general Abed Briki continues to argue that the interim government should be supported. But under pressure from the ranks of working people the union federation’s four ministers withdrew from the interim government January 17.

Tunisia’s interim president Foued Mebazaa said he would begin talks with the unions soon and urged workers to be patient. “Your demands are legitimate,” he said, “but you must understand the difficult situation in which our country is confronted.”

Meanwhile, reports continue of efforts to organize at workplaces large and small. The Tunis daily *Le Quotidien* reported that nurses’ aides and housekeepers struck the Manar clinic, objecting to unfair firings and the lack of overtime pay. A strike at Tunisair February 12 forced the cancellation of several flights to Europe.

The freedoms already conquered by working people have opened up the possibility for workers and farmers to read and discuss in a way not possible for decades. In a story from Tunis, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, “Small crowds gather around bookshop windows to view previously banned works critical of the regime, radio comedians perform comic impressions of top officials, and newspaper editors enjoy freedoms that are almost unprecedented in the Arab world.”

Bipartisan budget

Continued from front page

ever, would see their budgets reduced. The five-year freeze on domestic programs, if enacted, would reduce spending in real dollar values to its lowest level since 1961 when President Dwight Eisenhower left office.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides heating aid, would be cut by \$2.5 billion. Community development block grant programs that renovate housing for low income workers would be cut by \$300 million. Housing construction for seniors and those with disabilities would receive \$172 million less. Pell grants, for students who need financial aid to attend school, would be terminated for those taking summer classes.

Obama said his budget proposals “would mean cutting things that I care deeply about. But if we’re going to walk the walk when it comes to fiscal discipline, these kind of cuts will be necessary.”

Unemployment remains high

Meanwhile, the White House announced that official unemployment will remain high. It estimates a 9.3 percent jobless rate for the rest of this year and projects slower economic growth than was originally forecast. Under the proposed budget a Labor Department plan to employ older workers would be chopped in half. The budget cuts come on top of an already announced two-year pay freeze for more than 2 million civilian federal workers, and a second year in a row halt to any cost-of-living increase for Social Security recipients.

President Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden met with Republican leaders John Boehner and Kevin McCarthy February 9 about the budget proposals. After the meeting Boehner said, “We were able to find enough common ground, I think, to assure the American people that we are willing to work on their behalf and willing to do it together.”

Republicans had earlier submitted a “Pledge to America,” vowing to make deeper cuts and restore spending levels to what they were in 2008.

The *New York Times* noted, “The point of Mr. Obama’s forecast is less to promise a specific result than to signal to voters and financial markets that he is serious about reducing annual deficits.”

Whatever bipartisan budget is eventually passed, it will be aimed at deepening the assault on working people, as the capitalist class and its government tries to get workers to go along with the “tough choices” for years to come. Obama says the budget cuts are just “a down payment” on what will have to be done to secure the fiscal health of the country.

Both the Democrats and Republicans continually point to the need for substantial cuts in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. All the while, wealthy bondholders received almost \$170 billion in interest payments in the 2011 fiscal year.

In addition to federal budget cuts, workers across the country are facing sharp attacks on the state level—many of the deepest assaults at the hands of Democratic governors. In New York, newly elected Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo is proposing to close the state’s \$10 billion budget gap with cuts to Medicaid and education. California governor Edmund Brown, also a Democrat, aims to cut wages for all nonunion state employees by 10 percent and spend 20 percent less on higher education funding.

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LETTERS

Coverage of Egypt

Thanks for your coverage of the protests in Egypt in issue 7. I’d spent quite a few days watching the continuous coverage on Aljazeera/English TV, but couldn’t get any feel for what the working class was doing. I was counting on the *Militant* for that kind of detail.

T.M.
Washington, D.C.

Appreciates paper

I love to read the *Militant!*
R.O.
Brooklyn, New York

Prisoners’ Fund

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M.N.
Patterson, New York

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More on Cuba, Haiti, Africa

If possible could you please run more information about new books on Cuba, Haiti, and Africa.

Edith Adachi
Chicago, Illinois

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.